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ABSTRACT

Sentence analysis by the Reed and Kellogg technique of diagraming can present the exact function of every clause in the sentence, of every phrase in the clause, and of every word in the phrase. Furthermore, it can teach the pupil to look through the literary order and discover the logical order, and it is from the teacher that the student learns the rules of logical order before he can write. What happens, however, is that this method, being prescriptive--first the rules, the forms and then the "stuffing"--intimidates the students so that they write very reluctantly and awkwardly. Collaborative learning, on the other hand, provides an opportunity for the students to help each other to write before a teacher lays down the rules. First the students are encouraged to write freely, uncriticized. Next, the students are encouraged to share their writings with each other for feedback, and then they proceed with editing. Teachers in this situation become tutors who help students with their problems in editing. At this point the teacher may, for purposes of elucidating sentence analysis, use Kellogg and Reed, but not as the point of departure. (HOD)

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Does Anybody Need Reed and Kellogg Any More?

Martha A. Fisher

One hundred and five years ago a certain professor named Alonzo Reed and another named O. H. Hall copyrighted a "system of Diagrams . . . grown out of the suggestions of different teachers in the [Brooklyn Collegiate and] Polytechnic Institute . . . [which] show, at a glance, the relations of every word and division of the sentence and are a device attractive and helpful to the pupil in the preparation of his written lessons." With this glowing definition Alonzo Reed and Brainerd Kellogg concluded the Preface to their 1884 edition of Graded Lessons in English: An Elementary English Grammar, adding: "the copyright now stands in our own name."[1]

One hundred and five years later, elementary, secondary, and higher schools of learning all over the United States are still using this "device"--though I wonder how many would testify in public that it is really very "attractive" or actually "helpful to the pupil in the preparation of his written lessons." Certainly few of my freshmen or sophomores would so testify, although well over half the students of every class I have taught at Mont Alto Campus of The Pennsylvania State University admit to some acquaintance with the "device." In almost six years, not more than

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seven or eight of my students have said they have ever heard of tree diagrams, slot-and-filler diagrams, or even of sentence patterns; but everyone has heard of "diagrams" (no identifying name used--or needed).

One does have to marvel at such durability. Denounced across the land as dull, useless, misleading, the bearded "device" is still stubbornly alive after more than a century: a strong visual reminder that the philosophy of instruction that inspired it has also stubbornly survived.

Reed and Kellogg held the study of grammar essential for the mastery both of correct speaking and of effective writing. Higher Lessons in English: A Work on English Grammar and Composition, published a year after the Graded Lessons, included a sharp reproof of those who "fail to see why the genius of young writers should be hampered by the restrictions of grammarians." Their rationale follows:

> From our own extended experience and from the nature of things, we are convinced that the oral instruction, the composition writing, and the studies in literature that are offered as substitutes for the study of grammar, invaluable as they are in themselves, fall far short of their greatest possible good, are more or less loose and erratic, unless based upon the science of language, upon those principles that underlie the structure of the English sentence. . . .

> The aim of this work is to make the Science of the Language . . . tributary to the Art of Expression. Every principle learned by the pupil is fixed in his memory and, above all, in his practice by varied and exhaustive drill in composition. He is constantly required to compose sentences, to arrange and rearrange their parts, to contract, expand, punctuate, and criticise them--the analysis furnishing him materials for the synthesis, and the synthesis supplementing the analysis. . . .
>
> We begin with the sentence, because the sentence is the unit of discourse. . . .[2]

Sentence analysis is even more strongly recommended in the Preface to the New Edition, 1896 of the Higher Lessons:

> Through the study of the sentence we not only arrive at an intelligent knowledge of the parts of speech and a correct use of grammatical forms, but we discover the laws of discourse in general. In the sentence the student should find the law of unity, of continuity, of proportion, of order. All good writing consists of good sentences properly joined. . . . [The student] should know the sentence as the skillful engineer knows his engine, that, when there is a disorganization of parts, he may at once find the difficulty and the remedy for it.[3]

Reed and Kellogg texts are obsessed with the sentence. If one examines the "supplementary Lessons on Composition" mentioned in the Preface to the New Edition, he finds a few pages each on "Qualities of Style," various aspects of "Criticism," "Variety in Expression," "The Paragraph" ("Weave the facts below into a paragraph"), "Paragraphs and the Theme" ("Note that several paragraphs form a composition or Theme"), "How to Write a Theme," "Letter Writing"--about thirty pages in all out of a total of 374 pages. The assumption is, obviously, that once the sentence has been mastered, only a few vague bits of advice are needed for the leap to the graceful essay. "All good writing consists of good sentences properly joined." Unfortunately Reed and Kellogg never really show very clearly how such joining can be effected.

It seems to me that it was (and still is) a fascination with the diagram itself that has fixed the sentence as the main object of attention in American schools. In the '40's and early '50's my own eighth and ninth grade pupils loved to draw diagrams. Early morning comers filled the blackboards with the most intricate diagrams they could devise in hot rivalry with each other. As early as 1896 Reed and Kellogg had felt impelled to warn: "Analysis by diagram often becomes so interesting that, like other good things, it is liable to be overdone. . . . When the diagram has served its purpose, it should be dropped" (p.vii). Of course if it is dropped, one must move on to other things--like the paragraph or even the theme--far less appealing than the diagram to compose and even less so to correct!

Reed and Kellogg called their diagram a "simple map . . . [which] will enable the pupil to present directly and vividly to the eye the exact function of every clause in the sentence, of every phrase in the clause, and of every word in the phrase. . . . It is only by the aid of such a map . . . that the pupil can, at a single view, see the sentence as an organic whole made up of many parts. . . . Without such map he must labor under the disadvantage of seeing all these things by piecemeal or in succession" (p.vi).

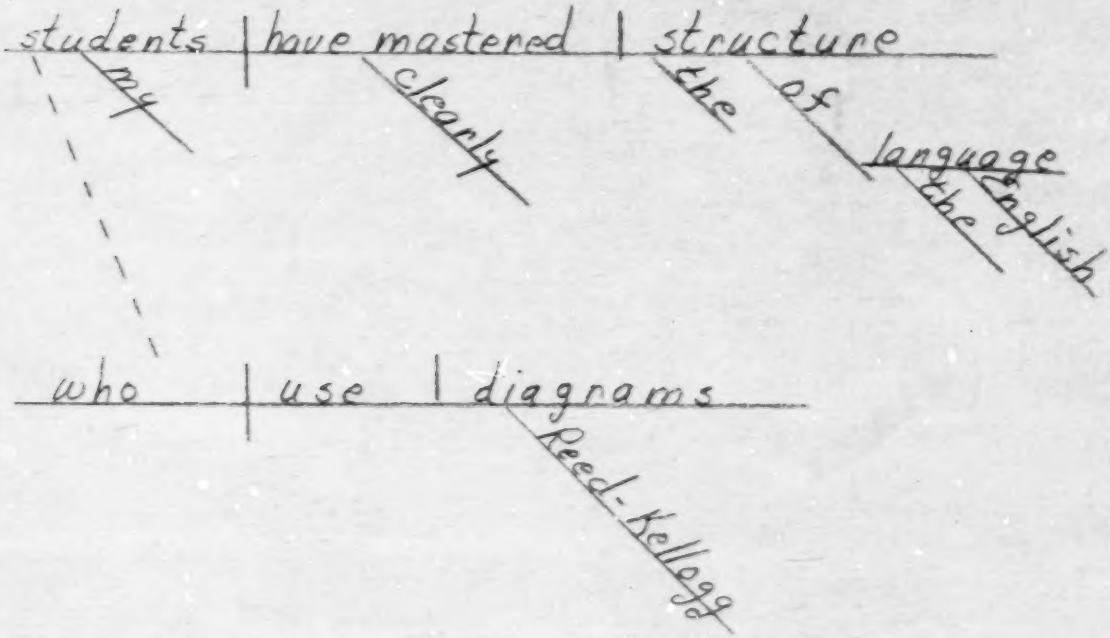
It seems ironic to me that Reed and Kellogg apparently saw no contradiction between their concept of the sentence as an "organic whole" (the phrase is used frequently throughout the texts) and their own practice of chopping the sentence to virtual "piecemeal" in order to put complete subject on the left side of a vertical line and complete predicate on the right. Teaching Latin and English to the same ninth-graders made me highly sensitive to the importance of word order. Long before I had ever heard of Chomsky, my pupils and I were devising word order rules: "This is the way the passive voice works in Latin, but this is the way it works in English."

Ten years ago I stumbled on Reed and Kellogg's amazing defense of their word-order distortions:

> The fact that the pictorial diagram groups the parts of a sentence according to their offices and relations, and not

> in the order of speech, has been spoken of as a fault. It is, on the contrary, a merit, for it teaches the pupil to look through the literary order and discover the logical order. He thus learns what the literary order really is, and sees that this may be varied indefinitely, so long as the logical relations are kept clear (p.vii).

"Literary order" vs. "logical order": what fun one can have with that bit of obfuscation! May I digress here to confess that one of my favorite games in my college grammar classes is to ask students to reconstruct the "original" sentence represented by the following diagram:



Without the clue of capitalization, we have found at least sixteen possible "original" sentences. Ten are declarative: five with the relative clause used restrictively; five non-restrictively. "Clearly" could occupy first, final, or three positions in relation to "have mastered." In addition, six interrogative versions--this time "clearly" being limited to three positions. Even with capitalization, there are two possibilities with "Clearly" as first word, eight with "My," and six with "Have." If these are all "literary" orders, what is the "logical" order?

Insistence upon their elusive concept of "logical order" is the key to the Reed-Kellogg method. The student must learn from the teacher the rules of "logical order" before he can write. Once he has learned the rules, the framework, he must stuff the framework with content--whether he really has much of anything to say or not. For years I have been laboring with rules and frameworks, encouraging the stuffing along with the most zealous of the Reed-Kelloggers. Disturbed as I was about the limitations of the Reed-Kellogg system, I meekly followed along in my early years of teaching. I guess I really didn't know what else to do. The ninth-grade English course demanded very little writing: a few teacher-prescribed exercises, an occasional paragraph or two of the "Summer Vacation" variety. My students never really had a chance to say anything.

Yet I had a simple faith that somehow within the next three years my sentence-saturated pupils would mature into graceful college-level writers--even though I knew they weren't doing much writing in high school either. After all, didn't many of them thank me later for their "good foundation in grammar"? They seemed to be doing well in college. I surely must have suspected even then that those who wrote well had found a way in spite of their secondary schooling, not because of it. Yet had I been asked, "Does anybody need Reed and Kellogg any more?" I am sure I would have replied, "Why yes, of course. Doesn't everybody?"

Learning in the late '50's about Waldo Sweet's exciting new structural texts in elementary Latin and then about the delights of structural and transformational analysis in English did not at first change my sentence-analysis approach very much. In recent years, it is true, my freshmen composition students have gone beyond the sentence to the paragraph and then to the combination of paragraphs that should magically produce a theme. But always by prescription. First come the rules, the forms; then the stuffing. Admittedly, many of my students have produced graceful--even sparkling--stuffings; but most have been so intimidated by the rules that they stuff very reluctantly, very awkwardly. The more rules of organization they study, the more apprehensive they become. The more models of good writing they

read, the more inferior they feel. The more cautions about usage and punctuation they hear, the more firmly they are convinced that they cannot write at all.

I had, of course, been hearing about collaborative learning for a long time. It sounded appealing, but somehow I just didn't see how it could work in my classroom, given the demands of the University syllabus. My students had "shared" papers in class--but only the finished product. And everybody knew who would evaluate them in the end. It never occurred to any of us that it should be otherwise: the instructor had set up the forms, had laid down the rules--so she had the key to all the "right" answers. Even when we used Ken Macrorie's popular "Writing Freely" with subsequent "Tightening,"[4] we still had a teacher-centered classroom.

Then I had an unexpected opportunity to see how effectively students can help each other to write before a teacher lays down the rules. In 1973 for the second time the Pennsylvania State University was conducting a special summer college preparatory program for Vietnam veterans who could not otherwise qualify for college admission. I was one of three selected as Communications instructors. Months in advance of the program we read, at the suggestion of our director, Peter Elbow's Writing Without Teachers.[5] All three of us caught Elbow's enthusiasm and decided that our small groups of men (in all, six classes of nine or ten each) would provide the ideal opportunity to try out out own version of the Elbow approach. Briefly, we planned first to

encourage free, uncriticised writing to get the juices flowing. Next we would encourage students to share their writings with each other for the feedback they needed to reinforce their earlier efforts. After confidence had been gained, first steps would be made toward the editing process. At last--writing before prescribing rules!

Our plan worked beautifully for all but a very few of the most insecure students. Men who were sure they couldn't write at all were eagerly sharing their lively writings with the rest of the group after two or three meetings. We started with a free-writing game the first session: "Keep your pencil moving for five minutes; write anything that comes into your head." With a shrug they set to; at the end of five minutes they laughed with relief. Seated in a close circle, they began to peer curiously at each other's papers. One asked permission to read his neighbor's aloud--and they were off. Later when short narrative and descriptive papers were assigned, each was read to the group and each member of the group responded. First reactions were cautious: "Yea, man, that's cool!" Comments were supportive, pointing out effective phrasings or story lines. But as the students became more discerning and more trustful of each other, one might say, "Maybe you better tell what type maneuver that was" or even "I don't get it, man--nothin'!" As the term progressed, comments dealt not only with content but also with stylistic problems. As the instructor was a participant in the writing class, like

the others his evaluation was only one of the nine or ten views every writer received.

Writing classes met three days a week; on the other two days the men attended workshops where the instructors became tutors to help them with their problems in editing. As tutor I found myself occasionally actually sketching a Reed-Kellogg diagram--if it seemed familiar and helpful to the student. But it was only one of many aids at my disposal--not the point of departure.

Final papers written in class revealed that amazing progress had been made, even by students who were not yet ready to enter freshman composition. No single class of composition students I have ever taught has progressed so rapidly as my "teacherless" writing classes.

Now I am planning ways to use collaborative learning in my regular freshman classes. I have been rereading Kenneth A. Bruffee's article in last February's issue of College English with new appreciation.[6] I commend his helpful presentation to others who may want to break away from their roles as sole prescribers and judges of their classrooms.

Do I need Reed and Kellogg any more? Occasionally, perhaps. If a student needs the reassurance of the familiar sentence-analysis in his editing. But I do not need the Reed and Kellogg

method any more to help a group of students begin a writing class. Does anybody?

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FOOTNOTES

[1]New York: Clark & Maynard, 1884, pp. 5-6.

[2]New York: Clark & Maynard, 1885, pp. 3-5.

[3]Revised Edition, 1896: Higher Lessons in English (New York: Maynard, Merrill, & Co., 1901), p. iv. All subsequent references from Reed and Kellogg are to this edition.

[4]Telling Writing (New York: Hayden Book Company, Inc., 1970).

[5]New York: Oxford University Press, 1973.

[6]"Collaborative Learning: Some Practical Models," CE 34 (February, 1973), 634-643.